

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Storytime™



GINGERBREAD MAN

Brer Rabbit, Christmas on the Farm,
The Little Match Girl and COOKIES!

“In fact, they look a lot like Santa.”





It's Snowing Stories Here at Storytime!

This issue is packed with snugglesome
stories to see you through the dark winter
nights - what better way to hibernate?

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Brer Rabbit's Christmas Dinner

It was a crisp winter morning and Brer Rabbit had popped out to visit his old friend, Brer Bear.

While he was out, Brer Fox skulked into Brer Rabbit's garden, dug up his entire crop of winter carrots and stuffed them into his sack.

Later, when Brer Rabbit got home and found his carrot patch all trampled and empty, he was furious – especially when he spotted foxy footprints everywhere. “Brer Fox! I knew I couldn’t trust him. I’ll get my carrots back or my name’s not Brer Rabbit.”



So off he went to Brer Fox's house. He knocked on the door, but Brer Fox didn't answer. He knocked again – harder this time – but Brer Fox still didn't open the door.

Brer Rabbit smelt the delicious aroma of vegetable soup wafting through the air. "I know you're in there, Brer Fox," called Brer Rabbit, "and I bet those are my carrots you're cooking. Open this door right now and give them back to me."

"Not a chance!" shouted Brer Fox. "I'm making enough soup to last me until spring and I'm not opening my door until then."

Brer Fox chuckled. "Thanks to you, I'll have a carroty Christmas feast."

This made Brer Rabbit hopping mad. He hammered at the door and even tried to kick it in, but Brer Fox just laughed and carried on cooking. He wasn't planning to open that door, no matter how hard Brer Rabbit knocked and kicked at it.

Brer Rabbit had no choice but to give up and hop away, but he didn't stay mad for long. Soon he was doing a happy jig and sniggering to himself. You see, Brer Rabbit was the smartest trickster in town and he had a plan to get his carrots back and teach Brer Fox a lesson too. ➡





Late on Christmas Eve, carrying a heavy sack of stones on his back, Brer Rabbit clambered on top of Brer Fox's roof. He crashed and banged about, making as much noise as he could.

"Who's clattering around up there?" called Brer Fox. "I'm trying to prepare my dinner in peace here."

"Why, it's Santa Claus," said Brer Rabbit in a deep voice. "And I've got a sackful of gifts here for Brer Fox. Is that you?"

"Yup, it sure is," said Brer Fox, suddenly excited. "Why don't you come on down the chimney and give it to me?"

"I'm afraid I can't!" cried Brer Rabbit. "I've got stuck in your chimney. Come outside and have a look."

Brer Fox unlocked his door for the first time in weeks and popped his head outside. Sure enough, Santa's feet were sticking out of his chimney.

"Santa, why don't you just pull yourself up and drop the sack of gifts down? I'm sure I can catch them."

"I can't," said Brer Rabbit. "The sack has got stuck too. You'll have to climb up the chimney and grab the string. Then you can pull it all the way down."

"That's a good idea," said Brer Fox, eager to open his gifts. "Up I come!"

Brer Fox wasted no time at all. He scrambled right up that chimney towards the sack.

As soon as Brer Rabbit heard him coming, he jumped up, slid off the roof and leapt through Brer Fox's open door. On the table there was a huge roast turkey with all the trimmings, tasty mince pies and, of course, his stolen carrots.

Brer Rabbit chortled, scooped it all up in his arms and ran all the way home. His mouth watered and his tummy rumbled in anticipation of a tasty meal.

Meanwhile, Brer Fox struggled up the chimney until he reached the sack. He tried to dislodge it, but it

was stuck fast, so he yanked the string as hard as he could.


The sack suddenly opened and stones rained down on Brer Fox's head: Bumpety-bumpety-bumpety-bump!

Brer Fox shot down the chimney faster than lightning and, when he saw his empty table, he howled with dismay. Brer Rabbit had taught him a lesson and got his Christmas dinner to boot! 🍷



Pudding Charms

By Charlotte Druitt Cole



Our Christmas pudding was made in November,
What we put in, I quite well remember:
Currants and raisins, and sugar and spice,
Orange peel, lemon peel – everything nice,
Mixed up together, and put in a pan.
“When you’ve stirred it,” said Mother, “as much as you can
We’ll cover it over, that nothing may spoil it,
And then, in the copper, tomorrow we’ll boil it.” ➔

DID YOU KNOW?

If you make your own Christmas pudding, it’s traditional to stir a charm or a silver coin into the mixture. Whoever gets the charm or coin in their portion is said to have good luck the following year. It’s a tradition that’s over 800 years old!



That night, when we children were all fast asleep,
A real fairy godmother came creep-a-creep!
She wore a red cloak and a tall steeple hat
(Though nobody saw her but Tinker, the cat!)
And out of her pocket a thimble she drew,
A button of silver, a silver horseshoe,
And whisp'ring a charm in the pudding pan popped them,
Then flew up the chimney directly she dropped them.

And even old Tinker pretended he slept
(With Tinker, a secret is sure to be kept).
So nobody knew, until Christmas came round,
And there, in the pudding, the treasures were found!



The Bears and the Sack

One Christmas Eve, two bears were strolling through the forest when one of them spotted a big red sack jutting out of a snowdrift.

She dug it out with her paws and opened it. It was full to the brim with brightly wrapped presents and toys.

“Oh, it must be my lucky day!” exclaimed the bear. “Fancy finding something as special as this! Judging by the weight of this sack, some of these presents must be very valuable. Lucky me!” ➡



“You could say that we are both fortunate,” said the bear’s friend. “After all, we are travelling together and, up until now, we have shared everything – our tent, our food and our stories. Perhaps we can share this good fortune too.”

The first bear shook her head. “Oh, no, no, no. This is different. I found the sack, not you. It is mine and I am going to keep it all for myself.”

The second bear was about to object when a wolf leapt out from behind a tree and howled, “Stop, thief!” The wolf was closely followed by its pack, which swiftly surrounded the two bears.

“That sack belongs to us. We left it there for our children to open on Christmas morning,” said the wolf, growling and baring its teeth.



The bear who found the sack gulped and said to her friend, "Oh dear, we'll be in great danger if we don't give them this sack. We're so unlucky!"

At this, the bear's friend said, "Oh, we are, are we? You wouldn't share your good luck with me earlier, so I don't see why I should share your bad luck with you now."

The second bear ran away, leaving his selfish friend to deal with her misfortune all on her own. Needless to say, the wolf soon got his sack. 🌀

HIDDEN TREASURES

There are three more sacks hiding in the snowy forest. **Tick the box when you spot them.**



Christmas on the Farm

Christmas Day was only two days away and it had been snowing hard on the farm. All the barns looked like they were covered with thick white blankets.

Tommy looked out of the window and watched his dad's old yellow tractor chugging away in the distance. His mum had gone into town to buy last-minute gifts and food for their Christmas dinner.

Tommy was daydreaming about the treats she might bring home when he heard something rumbling down the lane. A big red truck pulled up outside.



It was Mr Johnson from the Christmas tree farm and he was holding two huge Christmas trees. “Two trees for you, young Tommy. Sign here, please.”

“Two trees. Why have we got two?” asked Tommy.

“Don’t ask me, lad. Ask your mum and dad. They ordered one each.”

Tommy signed the form with his best handwriting then Mr Johnson drove away again. Tommy stood admiring the trees until his fingers and toes tingled with cold, then he went back inside and sat by the fire to warm them. His cat Luna stretched and jumped onto his lap.

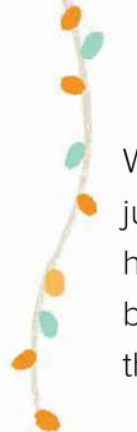
“I bet we’ve got two trees by accident, Luna,” said Tommy. “I bet Dad didn’t know that Mum had already ordered one – or the other way around. What shall we do with the second one?” Suddenly, Tommy had an idea.

“I know! Let’s put it in the barn for the animals. You can have a Christmas tree of your own.”

Luna sat up and purred.

“I’ll ask Mum and Dad when they get home,” said Tommy, then he spent the rest of the afternoon planning how to make the animals’ Christmas tree look special. ➡





When his parents got home, it was just as Tommy had guessed – they had ordered two trees by accident, but they loved his idea for a tree in the barn. Tommy went to bed excited.



The next morning, Tommy's dad put up the Christmas trees. The tallest tree stood in the barn. Tommy helped his dad with the chores first, then he asked his mum for the leftovers from last night's meal, as well as some old dishes, string and as many paper bags as she could spare.

"What are you going to do with it all?" asked his mum.

"You'll see," said Tommy.


He crunched his way through the fresh snow to the barn, laden with as many things as he could carry.

First he filled several paper bags with oats. He tied these halfway up the tree for Arrow the mare. Then he made up some mini bundles of hay and tied them beneath the bags so Gertie the cow could reach them. On the lower branches, he tied more bundles for Buttercup the calf. From the leftovers, he found three juicy bones, which he tied further down the tree for his sheepdog, Rover. In between the bones, he tied up Luna the cat's favourite turkey treats.

Next he filled a big dish with potato peelings for Penny the pig and her piglets. He filled another dish with grains for the lambs, and the last one with corn for the chickens. He put them all under the tree.

Finally, he tied carrots around the bottom of the tree for the rabbits he often saw hopping around the fields,





and he topped the tree with a little basket of nuts for the squirrels, just in case they visited too.

When Tommy finished it was the strangest Christmas tree he had ever seen. "I hope the animals like their presents," he said.

He ran back to the house to fetch his mum and dad and Luna. His parents were just finishing trimming the proper Christmas tree in their living room and it was all lit up and sparkly.

"Now let me show you mine," said Tommy, hopping from foot to foot with excitement.

At the barn, Mum and Dad were amazed by Tommy's tree. It was a marvellous sight.

"Well, let's see what the animals make of it," said Dad, opening up the stalls.

Of course, the animals came straight over to the wonderful tree and, within seconds, they were feasting on the delicious gifts Tommy had made for them. ➡



Arrow the mare, Gertie the cow, Buttercup the calf, Penny and her piglets, the lambs, the chickens and Luna the cat were all merrily crunching and munching. Rover the sheepdog, who had been snoozing in the corner, smelt something tasty in the air and bounded over, and it wasn't long before three rabbits hopped into the barn and two squirrels scurried to the top of the tree to gnaw on the nuts.

There was neighing and mooing and oinking and bleating and clucking and purring and woofing and twitching and nibbling – and laughing too!



“Well done, Tommy,” said Mum and Dad, grinning.
“That was a brilliant idea.”

Just then, the bright moon peeped out from behind a cloud and lit up the whole barn. At that moment the animals stopped eating. They turned to Tommy and said, “Thank you, Tommy. Merry Christmas to you!”

Tommy gasped, wide-eyed with wonder. But, just as quickly as it came, the moon ducked behind another cloud and the animals carried on eating as though nothing had happened. Had he imagined it? Had the animals really just talked to him? His mum and dad gave him a knowing nod and led him from the barn, so the animals could enjoy their Christmas feast in private. Tommy grinned and never ever forgot that magical Christmas on the farm. 🌀



WRITE IT!

Some people used to believe that at the stroke of midnight on Christmas Eve, animals could talk like humans. Do you have a pet? What do you think it would say to you if it could speak? Write an imaginary conversation between you and your favourite animal.

Gingerbread Man's Baking Challenge

Christmas was coming and it was the busiest time of year at Ginger's Bakery. Everyone in Storyland was craving mince pies, chocolate yule logs, and, of course, sweet gingerbread.

"It's a good job I can run fast," huffed Ginger, dashing to the work counter with more Christmas cupcakes to decorate. All day long, he had been rushed off his feet, running to and fro with deliveries, serving customers and preparing orders.



But there was one important order that Ginger still hadn't even started, and he had no idea how he was going to fit it in. Ginger was worrying about it when Old Mother Hubbard walked in.

"I'm so glad you're still open," she said. "Do you have any biscuits for my poor dog? Our cupboard is bare. My, you look exhausted, dear!"

"I am," said Ginger, handing her the last biscuits in the shop. "And I have to be up before dawn to bake and decorate again – and do all my deliveries."

"You need a helper."

"I've tried, but it didn't work. Jack and Jill kept falling down and a couple of the dwarves helped out, but they were too sleepy and dozey. Besides, nobody can run as fast as the Gingerbread Man," said Ginger, looking glum. ➡



“Actually, I know someone who’s good at running around – and he doesn’t mind being up when everyone else is asleep. I’ll ask him to pop by.”



Early the next morning, Ginger was busy baking when Wee Willie Winkie strolled in wearing his nightgown.

“Old Mother Hubbard said you need some help,” said Willie. “I love running through the town. I can help you with your deliveries.”

“But I’ve got deliveries all the way from the Seven Hills down to the Magic Meadow today. Are you sure you can manage?” asked Ginger.

“No problem,” said Willie, pulling on his coat and hat. It was starting to snow outside.

“Thank you! I’ve got a very important order I need to bake and deliver to Wizard’s Hat Peak by seven o’clock tonight. Your help will give me time to work on it.” Ginger felt so relieved.



Willie dashed off, his arms laden with baked goodies. He rushed back and forth all morning. He wasn't as fast as Ginger – after all, nobody can catch the Gingerbread Man – but he was an enormous help.

While Willie did the deliveries, Ginger speedily worked his way through his orders. At last, he came to the most important one of all – it had arrived in a big red envelope, stamped with the initials S.C. It was, without doubt, the biggest baking challenge Ginger had ever faced – his mystery customer had asked him to bake and decorate personalised gingerbread cookies for every single resident in Storyland!

Ginger carefully made the dough and rolled it out, then he used his cookie cutters to cut out the shapes. He placed the trays in the oven and, when the cookies were light golden brown, he took them out to cool.

Just then, Wee Willie Winkie returned. “That was so hard! Do you have any more deliveries?” he asked, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

“Not until later,” said Ginger. “You go home and have a nap. I'll wake you up when these are ready.”

So Willie left Ginger making bowl after bowl of colourful icing until, finally, he was ready to decorate the cookies. ➔



Answer: 11 star cookies.



bells, trees, holly leaves and candy canes too!



COUNT IT!

How many star cookies can you spot? **Write your answer in the box!**



The hours flew by and Ginger worked quickly. As he decorated each cookie and iced a name on it, his kitchen got messier, until it was covered in sticky icing and sprinkles. It was in a terrible state, but he had no time to tidy up.



When he had iced and boxed the very last cookie, he hurried over to Wee Willie Winkie's house to wake him. He rapped at the windows and cried through the lock, but Willie was fast asleep. It was no use – all that running around had worn him out.

"I'll just have to deliver them myself," sighed Ginger, but he realised he only had ten minutes to reach Wizard Hat's Peak!

As he sprinted along the Long and Winding Road, he said to himself, "Run, run, as fast as I can. I'll get there on time - I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

As he raced across the Far, Far Away Fields, he gasped, "Run, run, as fast as I can. I'll get there on time - I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

As he scrambled over the Seven Hills, he wheezed and panted, "Run, run, as fast as I can. I'll get there on time - I'm the Gingerbread Man!"





Finally, breathless and exhausted, he arrived just in time to hear a jingle of bells and a clatter of hooves, as Santa Claus pulled up in his sleigh.

“Ho, ho, ho, Ginger!” Santa chuckled merrily. “Thank you so much for the cookies. I do love a personalised gift – especially when it’s edible. I’ll put one in everyone’s stocking tonight.”

Ginger smiled. He was pleased that his mystery customer was so special.

“There’s a surprise waiting for you when you get back,” said Santa. “Now I must dash. Busy night ahead!”

Santa signalled his reindeer and they took off, flying over Wizard’s Hat Peak and into the night sky.

Ginger’s feet ached all the way home, but he couldn’t wait to see his surprise.

When he arrived, he was amazed to find that his kitchen was sparkling clean and there was an enormous gift box waiting for him. The gift tag read *‘Have a break from all that running round! Love S.C.’*

Ginger tore off the wrapping paper to reveal a bike with a massive basket attached. It was just right for delivering baked treats to his customers. It was the perfect present!

Ginger smiled and decided that all his hard work had been worth it. From now on, he wasn’t running anywhere. He was going to cycle instead! 🌀

Next time: Puss in Boots has an unexpected encounter with a troll!

The Toy Tree

By Nicky Saint

It was a bare, craggy tree with spindly branches which looked like they might snap at any moment, but it was the only tree in the estate gardens.

Gabe loved the tree. He and his friends played by it all the time. They built dens against it, they sat in its shade on sunny days, and it was always their base when they played tag. And, in spring, the tree cheered up the grey concrete with its blossom.

Mr Snider the caretaker hated the tree. When he had to mow the grass around it or sweep its blossom from the path, he'd grumble, "It's in my way!" or "Who has to clean up all this mess? Me, that's who!"

Sometimes he threatened to cut it down, but Gabe didn't think he'd ever go through with it. However, one drizzly morning he spotted Mr Snider striding towards the tree with a chainsaw.

Gabe leapt up and shouted, "Mum! What's Mr Snider doing?"

Mum put down her knitting needles – she was knitting everyone scarves for Christmas – and came over to the window.

"Is he going to cut our tree down, Mum? He can't! We've got to stop him!"

Gabe grabbed his mum by the hand and they pelted down two flights of stairs to the garden. They were soon standing between Mr Snider and the tree.



“Out of my way,” said the caretaker. “It’s time for this eyesore to go.”

Gabe crossed his arms and gave Mr Snider his best scowl, and his mum asked, “Have you got permission to do that, or a licence?”

“Don’t need one – I’m the caretaker!” sneered Mr Snider.

“But you can’t cut down public trees without a licence,” said Mum, trying to sound important. “And this tree is of great public interest.”

“How is it? It’s a flaming nuisance, that’s what it is, and I want it gone!”

“This is where we play. We love this tree,” pleaded Gabe.

“Not a good enough reason.” Mr Snider was getting his chainsaw ready.

Gabe desperately tried to think of more reasons to keep the tree, then he remembered the Christmas tree he’d seen in town. It had colourful tags on it and written on every tag was the name of a toy a child had wished for.

“You take a tag and buy the gift on it,” his mum had explained, “then a charity sends it to a child who might not get Christmas presents.” ➡



Before he knew it, Gabe said, “You can’t cut it down. It’s going to be a toy tree. We’re going to decorate it and put tags on it so we can buy Christmas presents for children who need them!” He flashed a warning look at his mum.

“Yes,’ Mum said enthusiastically. “We agreed it at the community meeting. You weren’t there, Mr Snider. We’re decorating it this weekend.”

Mr Snider looked suspicious. He almost turned purple trying to think up an argument, but he was beaten. He lowered his chainsaw and stormed off.

That evening, Gabe and his mum put up posters to let everyone know about the toy tree, and they contacted the charity to find out how to get tags.


By the weekend, the charity tags had arrived and the whole community was looking forward to decorating the tree. They brought along decorations, and someone baked mince pies. They all sang Christmas carols as they dressed the branches with baubles and tinsel, and it felt like a proper party.

Gabe and his friends hung the charity tags from the branches too. Everyone thought it was a wonderful idea.

When they had finished, the branches looked dazzling, but the trunk was still grey and bare.

“Hang on!” said Mum. “I’ve got just the thing.” She ran up to their flat and came back with a bundle of scarves in a rainbow of colours.





Every child grabbed a scarf and wrapped it around the trunk. The old tree soon looked bright and Christmassy.

As Gabe stepped back to admire everyone's handiwork, he spotted Mr Snider looking out of his window with a grumpy frown.

"Can we do the toy tree every year, Mum?" he asked.

"Definitely," she said. "You never know, maybe even Mr Snider will join in with the fun next year."

Gabe waved at him, but he closed his curtains. "Let's just leave one tag here – maybe he'll take it," he said.

So that's what they did, and everyone took a tag from the toy tree and went home feeling full of Christmas spirit. 🦋

Join In!

Every year, **Kids Out** charity runs a **Giving Tree** scheme to provide gifts for children in refuges. Until Christmas, for every **Storytime** back issue we sell in our shop, we'll donate an issue to **Kids Out** too. Visit storytimemagazine.com/shop to help us donate as many magazines as possible!

The Yule Lads

Kristin was excited. She had travelled on a plane for the first time ever to spend Christmas in Iceland with her grandparents.

“How will Santa know where to find me?” she asked her dad when they arrived.

“Santa doesn’t come to Iceland,” said Dad. Kristin frowned. “We have our own special visitors here. Grandma will tell you all about them.”

“Yes, you got here just in time,” said Grandma, hugging her tightly. “It’s December 12th, so our first visitor comes tonight. Do you have some spare shoes with you?”

Kristin looked confused, but nodded.



“Good. When you’ve unpacked, we’ll put one on the windowsill for Peg Leg and, if you’ve been well behaved, he’ll leave a little present inside.”

“But who is Peg Leg, Grandma?”

“He’s the first of the Yule Lads. There are thirteen of them in all. One Yule Lad comes down from the mountains every night from now until Christmas, leaving his troll mother, Gryla, behind.”

Kristin’s eyes grew wide. “But aren’t trolls horrible and scary?”

Grandma smiled. “Indeed. Gryla used to be very scary. She would carry off naughty children in her sack, but she’s too old and tired for that now, so she sends her sons instead.”

“Are they trolls too?” asked Kristin, feeling nervous.

“No, the Yule Lads are mischievous – they’re naughty but not scary. As long as you’re good, they’ll bring you gifts. In fact, they look a lot like Santa.”


“But what if I haven’t been good?” asked Kristin, remembering that she hadn’t brushed her teeth that morning.

“Then it’s a rotten potato in the shoe for you!” said Grandma, laughing.

“But I’m sure you have been good, so let me tell you all about them.”



Kristin snuggled up with Grandma, who began to tell her tale.

“Tonight it’s Peg Leg’s turn to visit. He got his name because his knees are so stiff – like wood! He likes to steal sheep’s milk but, lucky for the farmers, he can’t bend down to drink it. 

The legend of the **Yule Lads** has been part of Icelandic culture for hundreds of years, and children put out shoes on their windowsills to receive gifts like sweets and small toys. On Christmas Eve, it’s also traditional to give each other books as gifts and go to bed early to read them. We like that tradition!

"The second Yule Lad travels down tomorrow and he likes cow's milk – especially the creamy bit. His name is Gully Gawk, because he hides in the gullies of farmer's fields, waiting to steal milk from the cows.

"Next comes the littlest Yule Lad. He is called Stubby, as he is so short. Stubby is very naughty and he'll sneak into your kitchen and eat any crusts that are lying around."

"Has he ever sneaked into your kitchen, Grandma?" asked Kristin.

"Of course," said Grandma. "I had to chase him out with a broom! Now, where was I? Ah, the fourth Yule Lad is Spoon Licker. Whatever you do,

don't leave any spoons lying around on that day – he never returns them.

"Then there is Pot Scraper. He scrapes your pots looking for leftover scraps. One year he woke us with his banging and scraping. Your grandpa wasn't very happy, I can tell you."

Kristin laughed, imagining it.

"The following night, greedy Bowl Licker comes. This cheeky Yule Lad hides under the dining table and, as soon as anyone puts down a bowl, he grabs it and licks it clean – just like a cat. Terrible manners!"

Grandma tutted, but Kristin liked the idea of meeting Bowl Licker.



“December 18th is the worst, as that’s when Door Slammer visits. Naughty gnome! You can hear him all across town slamming doors. We always lock our doors so he can’t get in.

“And then comes Skyr Gobbler. Do you like yogurt, Kristin?”

Kristin nodded. “Especially when it’s blueberry-flavoured.”

“Good, then you will like skyr. It’s like yogurt and we eat a lot of it here in Iceland. Skyr Gobbler loves it too and he sneaks into the dairy and gobbles skyr until he’s fit to burst!

“His brother Sausage Swiper is just as bad. He comes the following night and

you can probably tell from his name that he likes sausages. Why, even the butcher locks his sausages away on Sausage Swiper night!

“Now, on December 21st, you might spot Window Peeper peeking through the glass. Don’t be worried – he’s just looking for something shiny to steal. He loves shiny things. Now, before I tell you about the next Yule Lad, have you heard of leaf bread, Kristin?”

“No, Grandma.” Kristin thought it didn’t sound very appetising.

“Well, I used to make it with your father every Christmas and I made some just for you. It’s a tradition, though we don’t usually eat it before Christmas Eve.”



Right on cue, Grandpa walked in with a plate of thin golden flatbreads with lacy patterns cut into them – they looked like snowflakes. Kristin took a bite of one. It was crisp and delicious.

Grandma nibbled at one and said, “Even better with butter. We’ll make them again before Christmas, but not on the 22nd, as that’s when Door Sniffer comes. He has a huge nose and he sniffs at the door for leaf bread. It’s his favourite.”

“I don’t blame him,” said Kristin, picking at the crumbs on the plate.

Grandma looked pleased and she continued with her story. “After him, there is Meat Hook. In the olden days, he used to climb up on your roof, drop his hook down the chimney and steal any meat you had cooking over the fire. Most people don’t cook that way now, but he still lurks around, trying to pinch any meat he can find.

“And that brings us to the last of the Yule Lad brothers, Kristin. He isn’t so naughty really. He comes down on Christmas Eve and his name is Candle Stealer. If you go out at night and light your way with a candle, he will pop



out of his hiding place and try to take it from you. The impish little fellow just loves candles!”

“And what happens to them all after that?” asked Kristin.

“Then they return to the mountains to spend the rest of Christmas with their mother Gryla and their pet, the giant Christmas Cat.”

“Grandma, it sounds like they should get rotten potatoes in their shoes.”

Grandma laughed. “Maybe they do! Perhaps grumpy old Gryla gives them rotten potatoes instead of presents.”

That gave Kristin an idea. “Perhaps if we leave each Yule Lad a little gift as well as an empty shoe, they might not be so naughty. They might leave only nice presents for the children and no rotten potatoes at all.”

“That sounds like a good plan,” said Grandma. “What will you give them?”

“Their favourite things, of course! Let’s put a glass of sheep’s milk out for Peg Leg tonight. We’ll put it right next to my shoe on the windowsill.”

So that’s what they did and, when Kristin woke up the next morning, she was excited to find that Peg Leg had left a present in her shoe. It was her favourite chocolate bar.

As she peeled off its golden wrapper, she was sure she saw Peg Leg peep out from behind a snowy mound and wink at her. Kristin smiled and waved. Christmas in Iceland was going to be good after all. 🍬



The Little Match Girl

By Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time in Copenhagen, it was New Year's Eve and the snow was falling heavily. It was almost dark and it was terribly cold outside.

In the frosty gloom, a little girl was walking barefoot through the streets. She had been wearing shoes, but they were once her mother's and they were far too big for her. As she ran across the road to avoid traffic, the shoes fell off her feet. She lost one and a little boy ran away with the other. And so the little girl's feet were bare and stinging with cold.



In her apron, she had several boxes of matches and she held out a box in her hand, hoping someone would buy it from her – but no one had bought any matches all day long. She hadn't earned a penny. Shivering with cold, she tiptoed along. The snowflakes landed on her beautiful curls.

As she peeped through the windows into the brightly lit rooms, she could see tables laden with food for New Year's Eve parties. Even though she wouldn't get a morsel to eat, the sight of it made her feel warm inside.

At last, she sat down by a wall and tucked her feet beneath her. Though the wind was icy and the snow was falling, the little match girl couldn't go home without selling some matches, because her father would be angry. Besides, it was just as cold at home, where the wind whistled through the holes in their roof.

The little girl's hands began to feel numb, so she took out a match and lit it to heat them up. She scratched it against the wall and a glowing flame sputtered to life, like a little candle. ➔

Think About It

Hans Christian Andersen wrote this story to encourage readers to think about people who are less fortunate than themselves – especially at Christmas, when it's so cold outside. What act of kindness could you do to help someone in need this year?

She held each hand over the match and imagined it was an old stove with a wonderful fire burning inside. How cosy it felt! She stretched out her feet to warm them on the stove too, but the little flame vanished. All that was left was a burnt-out match.

She struck another match against the wall and this one burned even more brightly. Like magic, it seemed to melt away the wall and she could see inside the house. There was a snow-white tablecloth spread with shining cutlery and a grand dinner service, and a fat roast goose in the centre, stuffed with apples. It jumped up and waddled towards her, but just then, the match went out and she could only see the wall again.


She lit another match and found herself sitting inside the house now, beside the most beautiful Christmas tree. There were hundreds of pretty candles burning on its branches. She stretched her hands towards them so she could feel their comforting warmth.

The match went out, but somehow she could still see the candles. They floated higher and higher into the sky until they looked just like stars. One of them soared across the sky, leaving a fiery trail behind it.

The little girl thought, "Someone must be going up to the heavens," because that's what her beloved grandmother used to tell her when they saw a shooting star together. Her grandmother had died earlier in the year.

She struck another match against the wall and everything became bright and magical again.





The whole world seemed to glow and, suddenly, the little girl's grandmother appeared. She was standing before her and looking as kind and lovely as ever. She stretched out her arms towards the little match girl.

"Grandmother!" cried the child. "I've missed you so much. Please don't disappear when the match burns out. Please don't vanish like the warm stove did and the roast goose and the beautiful Christmas tree! Take me with you. Oh, please take me with you!" ➡



Desperate to keep her grandmother with her, the little girl struck the whole bundle of matches. They blazed so brightly, it looked almost like daylight. Her grandmother, rosy-cheeked and happy, swept the little girl into her arms and, together, they floated up and flew right over the cold streets.

They looked down on the twinkling city and up, up, up they flew above the earth and among the stars, where there was no cold, no hunger and no fear.



On New Year's Day, when people found the little girl with snowflakes in her curls, huddled against the wall, she looked so peaceful, it took them some time to realise she was no longer alive.

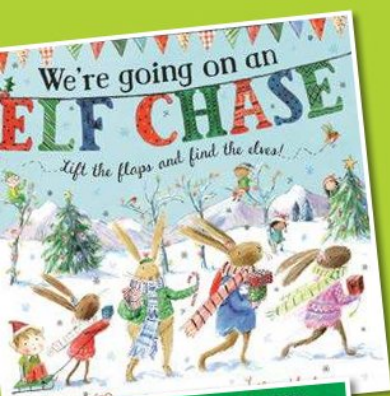
“She must have used up the matches to warm herself,” they said. Their hearts filled with sorrow and guilt because they hadn’t helped her. However, they didn’t know the magical things the little girl had seen and how she had joined her dear old grandmother to travel into the bright new year. 🌀



STORY MAGIC

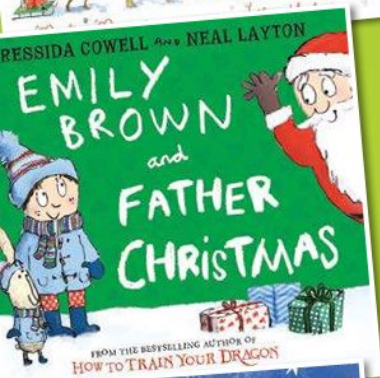
Not sure what to get someone for Christmas? After a subscription to Storytime, you just can't beat a book! Here are four of our favourites.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH!



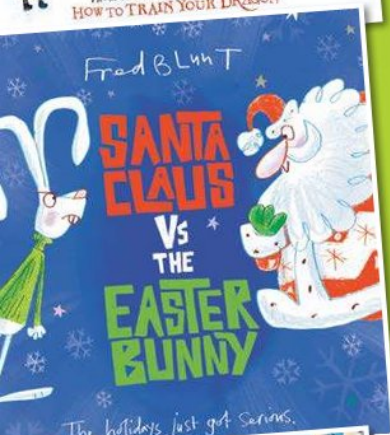
★ WE'RE GOING ON AN ELF

CHASE by Martha Mumford and illustrator Laura Hughes (Bloomsbury) is a beautiful interactive book with lots of flaps to lift so little ones can help four intrepid bunnies find ten hidden elves. With many animals to meet along the way and plenty of opportunities to read along, it's a sheer delight.



★ EMILY BROWN AND FATHER

CHRISTMAS is by Cressida Cowell and illustrated by Neal Layton (Hodder Children's Books) and it's a great addition to the Emily Brown series. Santa is in a pickle, and it's up to Emily and her faithful sidekick Stanley to make sure everyone gets a pressie. A story that celebrates the best of Christmas.

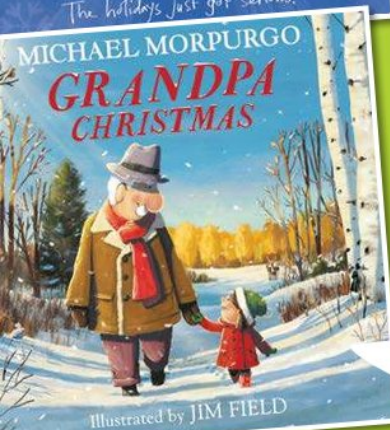


★ SANTA CLAUS VS THE EASTER

BUNNY by Fred Blunt (Andersen Press) is exactly what you'd expect from this hilarious author/illustrator – riotous and wonderful. The Easter Bunny has had enough of doing everything alone, while Santa surrounds himself with a team of helpers, so he hatches a plan to get even – a very chocolatey plan! This is sure to make you chuckle.

★ GRANDPA CHRISTMAS

by Michael Morpurgo and illustrator Jim Field (Egmont) is the most poignant and moving of our festive book round-up. Every Christmas, it's a tradition of Mia's family to read a letter her late grandpa wrote to her. The letter recalls happy times together when she was younger, but it's also a heartfelt plea to us all to be better guardians of our planet. Definitely one to share and treasure.



COMPETITION!

Want to win this month's selection of brilliant books? To be in with a chance, visit: storytimemagazine.com/win

LAST-MINUTE GIFT!

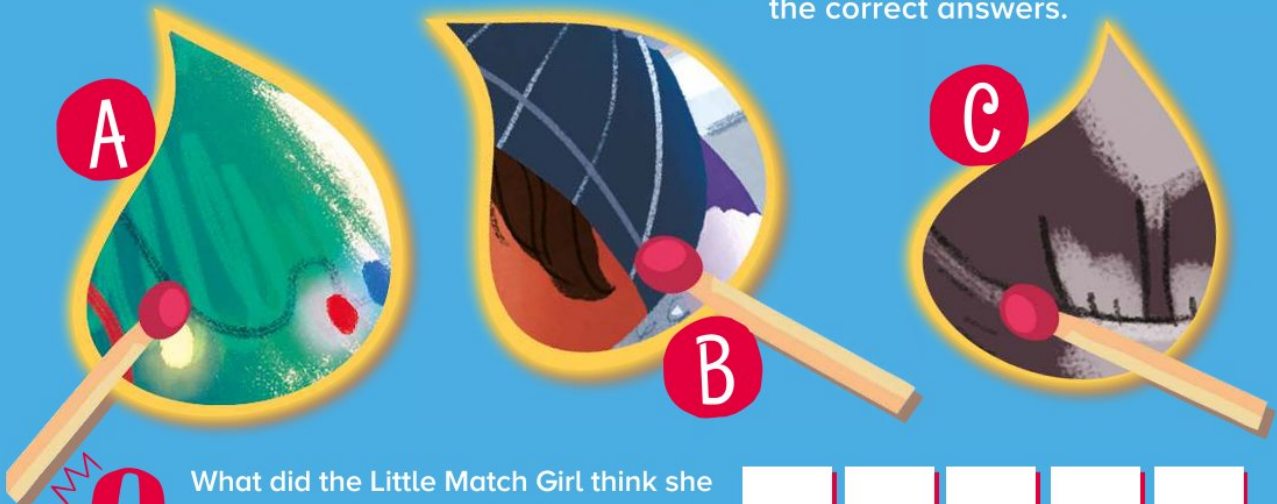
It's not too late to give someone a Storytime subscription for Christmas. Subscribe now to get our January issue. You can even download a certificate to put in a gift card for the lucky recipient: storytimemagazine.com/certificate

Storytime playbox

Have a go at our festive puzzles, complete a mega word search, decorate gingerbread, and make your own special gift tags.

1 ALL LIT UP

What can you spot in the Little Match Girl's matchlight? Turn to page 48 to see if you got the correct answers.



Q What did the Little Match Girl think she saw when she struck the first match?
Write your answer here.

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2 CARROT COUNT

Brer Rabbit has dropped his precious carrots. Follow the trail and count them up as you go. **Write the total at the end of the trail.**



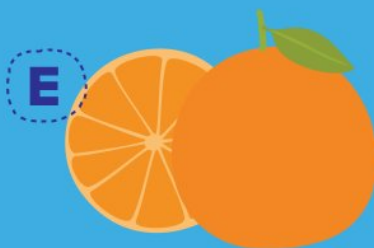
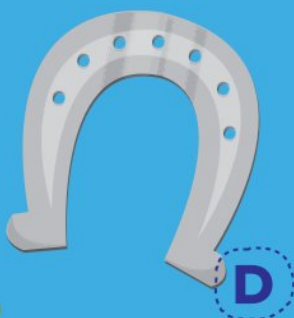
45



3

PERFECT PUD

Which of these items were not added to the Christmas pudding in our poem? **Circle them.**



4 ANIMAL ANAGRAM

The farm animals have a special festive message for Tommy. **Unscramble the letters** to work out what it is.



RYMER

SARCTMISH



5

CHRISTMAS COOKIES

Help Ginger **ice his gingerbread cookies** so he can deliver them to Santa on time!



⑥ MAKE YOUR OWN GIFT TAGS

Inspired by our story **The Toy Tree**, make and decorate your own Christmas gift tags for your tree.

- Download and print our **Storytime Christmas Gift Tags** from storytimemagazine.com/free – there are a few designs to choose from and we've left one blank for your own design.
- Cut them out, colour them in and decorate them using glitter, sequins or gems if you like. Allow them to dry.
- Write a message to whoever you're sending your gift to. Use a fancy gel or glitter pen to make it look special.
- If you want to create your own family Giving Tree for charity, write on a gift you think a child of your age would love. Make sure it's something realistic and something people can afford to buy and look after. A book is a better idea than a horse!

TIP! To donate a Storytime back issue to the charity Kids Out, visit storytimemagazine.com/shop

Ask a grown-up!



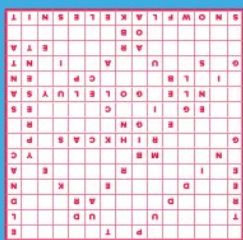
In our Icelandic myth, which Yule Lad is the first Christmas visitor on December 12th?

- Peg Leg
- Skyr Gobbler
- Bowl Licker



⑧ SPOT IT!

The wolf has dropped his sack of presents again. Colour in this gift box when you spot it.



ANSWERS: 1. All Lit Up – A. Christmas tree, B. Boy, C. Cat, Q. Stove; 2. Carrot Count – 15; 3. Perfect Pud – A and F; 4. Animal Anagram – The message is 'Merry Christmas'; 7. Quick Quiz – A; 9. Christmas Word Search – see right.

CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH!

Find the Christmassy words from this issue in the grid below.
Words run up, down, forwards, backwards and diagonally.



Bauble
Candle
Carol
Gingerbread

Mince Pie
Present
Pudding
Sack



Santa
Sleigh
Snowflake
Tinsel

Tree
Turkey
Yule Log



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in issue
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